

St Catherine's School

Grove Road, Ventnor, Isle of Wight, PO38 1TT

Inspection dates 19–20 June 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2
Overall effectiveness of the residential experience		Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Teaching is typically good at this school. Teachers know their students very well. They plan most lessons to ensure that everyone knows what they have to do to learn well.
- Students work hard and make good progress from their starting points. They enjoy attending school and have well-formed ideas about what they would like to do in the future.
- Students behave well in lessons and around the school site. Respectful relationships between students and staff are visible at all times.
- Students and their parents agree that all are kept safe and well looked after.
- The overall effectiveness of the sixth form is good. Students work hard. They enjoy the opportunity to spend time at college and at the school's work-related education centre.
- Well-developed systems for checking on everyone's work and achievements ensure that school leaders have precise information about strengths and weaknesses. This means that they can plan to make the school even better.
- Governors take care to hold school leaders to account. They ask searching questions in meetings. During regular visits to the school they review how well everyone is working.
- The school meets the national minimum standards for residential special schools.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- In a few lessons, insufficient attention is given to planning lessons which stretch and support every student equally well.
- The administration of medication does not always meet standards of best practice.
- Marking and commenting on students' work are inconsistent. Sometimes, teachers do not offer advice about next steps.
- School leaders have not ensured that all safety measures are in place in every area of the residence for managing all risks.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 14 lessons. On two occasions they were joined by a member of the school's leadership team. During walks around the school with senior staff, they learned about pupils' experiences at the school and in the wider community.
- A number of important documents and policies were scrutinised. A review of the minutes of governing body meetings was carried out. Inspectors evaluated the school's own systems for monitoring its work and making decisions about its strengths and areas that need to be improved.
- School systems for keeping pupils safe and well were rigorously scrutinised.
- Inspectors met pupils in their living areas and in school. At meal times, during breaks and in lessons, students provided their views about the school. Inspectors attended an assembly led by local police officers.
- The views of the 23 parents who responded to the online Parent View survey were taken into account, as well as those of the 24 members of staff who completed their questionnaires.

Inspection team

Bob Pugh, Lead inspector	Additional inspector
Andrew Lyons	Additional inspector
Maire Atherton	Social care inspector
David Coulter	Social care inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- St Catherine's is a smaller-than-average-sized day and residential school for students who have speech, language and communication difficulties.
- All of the students have statements of special educational needs. A small number are entitled to receive the pupil premium (additional funding made available by the government for children who are looked after and those entitled to receive free meals), and the proportion of such pupils in the school is lower than the national average.
- Almost all students are of White British heritage. Students come from homes on the Isle of Wight and on the mainland.
- Since the previous inspection, there has been a change in school leadership. The principal has been in post for three years and the leadership team has been re-organised.
- The school is on a split site. Sixth form students have most of their lessons in the sixth form centre, away from the main school building.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching so that more is outstanding by:
 - ensuring that in every lesson, planning provides sufficient challenge and support for every individual
 - ensuring work is regularly marked, with advice given about what is to be learned next
 - providing more opportunities for students to assess their own achievements.
- Review the administration of medication to ensure that standards of best practice are met at all times.
- Regularly review environmental safety measures to ensure they remain fit for purpose, in particular, window restrictors.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- From their varied starting points, students make good progress. The most able gain GCSE qualifications whilst others leave with BTEC or entry-level awards.
- Students achieve well over time in literacy and mathematics. They enjoy reading newspapers and magazines and make good use of the internet to strengthen their understanding of topics covered in lessons.
- There are no differences in the rates of progress made by different groups. Girls do as well as boys and those who receive support from additional funding make the same amount of progress as everyone else.
- Students and their parents can be confident that the information they receive about progress is accurate because teachers take care to compare how well their students are doing with progress made by others in similar schools.
- Students in the sixth form achieve well. They make good use of the facilities at the school site and particularly enjoy the opportunities for further study when they attend college. They are very enthusiastic in lessons about the world of work at the vocational education centre. For example, students learn well about the skills needed in the building trade.
- Students do not always get enough opportunities to review how much they have achieved in lessons. Their assessment of their own progress is sometimes included in work files, but this is inconsistent. This means that their views about their own learning are not always taken into account in every lesson.
- However, students are aware of their targets. They contribute to those meetings where their education, care and therapy targets are reviewed by staff and by their parents.
- Students are justifiably proud of their achievements outside school. Older students recently won awards in an island-wide young enterprise competition, while others have used their good social skills when working as leaders at cubs and scout groups.
- They are well prepared for the next stages of their lives and learning.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching is almost always good. Sometimes teaching is outstanding, and a very small amount requires improvement. Teaching is particularly strong where planning focuses closely on each student so that their individual needs are met.
- Therapists contribute well to strong teaching. In a successful physical education lesson, the teacher and therapist took it in turn to lead, ensuring that each student practised and improved movement and coordination skills.
- Teaching in the sixth form is never less than good in classroom lessons, workshops and specialist teaching areas. In a science lesson, excellent teaching led to outstanding achievement, and students worked conspicuously well at their individual tasks. Because the teacher challenged them regularly to test their own ideas and conclusions, students tried even harder to produce accurate results.
- Resources are well organised so that students gain the most from them. Teaching assistants usually provide well-pitched support, helping students to work out how they will arrive at an answer. As a result, students are confident learners. They use all the equipment available to good effect, from carrying out individual research on the internet to using calculators to improve their number skills.
- Teachers ensure that numeracy and literacy are taught well in all subjects. In a food technology lesson, students measured and estimated how much of each item they would need to produce a meal. They used their good literacy skills to read menus and to write notes about their work at the end of the lesson.

- Sometimes, students are given more help than is necessary. On these occasions, they are not routinely challenged to find answers for themselves.
- In almost all lessons, teachers and their assistants provide good feedback to students about their work. They question them frequently about how much they have understood and shape the next part of the learning according to the answers they are given.
- There are some inconsistencies in the way in which teachers mark and comment on students' work in their files and books. Moreover, there is an occasional lack of clarity about how students should move forward, and missed opportunities for students to assess for themselves how well they are doing.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The behaviour of students is good. Positive attitudes to learning by the overwhelming majority of students are seen in almost all lessons. Their attendance levels are high in comparison with similar schools and they say that they enjoy school.
- Very occasionally, including in the sixth form, students need additional support to stay on task. This is because lesson planning has not fully addressed their particular needs.
- Students are excellent ambassadors for their school. Their well-received contributions to community events has been frequently recognised and celebrated by others. Good examples include participation in youth conferences or sporting competitions such as the Special Olympics.
- Students say that they usually feel safe at the school, although a few told inspectors that they had concerns about the school's site and buildings, particularly the open playing field area.
- Older students in the sixth form work well in class and adopt mature attitudes towards college and work experience.
- The school's work to keep students safe and secure is good. Very effective teaching about staying safe helps students to feel confident at school and in the wider community. During the inspection, two police officers led an assembly about the dangers of the internet. Students concentrated extremely well and asked highly relevant questions as well as talking about their own experiences.
- Bullying of any kind is very rarely heard of at this school. When it occurs, perpetrators and victims are supported well. Recording of incidents is thorough and there is good liaison with parents and with other professionals.
- All staff work well together to foster excellent relationships amongst students, leading by example in classrooms and the residences. Everyone is polite and respectful of each other's needs. There is no discrimination of any kind and everyone has an equal opportunity to use all available resources to the fullest extent.
- As a result, very many students become more positive about learning and more confident in relationships with others during the time that they are at school.

The leadership and management are good

- School leaders, including governors, share an ambitious vision for students. They convey this vision to everyone in the school community. Consequently, students develop as confident learners and responsible members of the wider community.
- Good tracking systems provide school leaders with precise information about rates of individual achievement. They analyse the results to decide how to pitch additional support for those who are not making anticipated progress, as well as to provide extra challenge for those who are forging ahead.

- Nevertheless, there remain a very few occasions when pupils are not challenged to do their best. Teachers, therapists and carers make an equal contribution to improvement planning. This means that students nearly always benefit from well-coordinated learning and development programmes.
- Middle leaders plan well, so that a broad range of relevant subjects is taught in each key stage. In the sixth form, classroom learning, college and work experiences are blended neatly to provide students with those skills they need for making the most of future opportunities.
- Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very well met in assemblies, in lessons and in the wider community. A strong link with a school in Africa provides many good opportunities for learning about similarities and differences amongst people and cultures.
- Staff are enthusiastic about the opportunities for professional development and can give good examples of how this has helped to improve their teaching. Staff performance is monitored well by leaders so as to guide staff development.
- School leaders have used external advisers to good effect to check their own judgements of strengths and weaknesses.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body helps to raise standards. They question school leaders closely about how well everyone is doing. They visit regularly to develop their own knowledge of what is successful. They test what they have learned from reviewing achievement data against their own observations. Governors take into account as many opinions as possible, including those of parents and others in the local and wider community. They have ensured that all national requirements are met for keeping students safe. Governors know how additional funds have been used to improve teaching so that everyone has the best opportunity for learning well. They use the results of performance management programmes to reward successful teachers. All expenditure is closely monitored and school leaders are held to account to ensure that resources are used efficiently.

Outcomes for boarders/Outcomes for residential pupils

are outstanding

Quality of boarding provision and care/Quality of residential provision and care

is outstanding

Boarders' safety/Residential pupils' safety

is good

Leadership and management of boarding provision/Leadership and management of the residential provision

are outstanding

- Students live happy, active lives at school. They enjoy warm, trusting relationships with each other and staff. This underpins excellent progress in their social development. Students lead their own residential experience and feel that their voice is listened to. They are exceptionally well behaved.
- Everything is geared towards equipping students to move on. A parent observed that 'staff all seem to share the school ethos of helping students reach a point where they have the confidence to lead their own lives'. Staff know students well and provide consistent care and individually tailored support.
- Students' health is effectively promoted by the experienced school nurse, with good support

from local services. For example, staff vigilance ensured an emerging health issue was identified and action taken immediately. Systems for administering medication do not always meet best practice standards.

- The premises provide challenges which are addressed creatively. Single rooms are available to all, which students are encouraged to personalise. Communal space provides opportunities for individual and shared activities.
- Annual risk assessments are detailed. Safety issues are addressed promptly, with professional expertise brought in as required. However, some day-to-day monitoring of environmental risk by school leaders is insufficiently robust, in relation to a window restrictor, for example.
- Arrangements for students to keep in touch with family and friends are personalised and varied.
- The vast majority of boarders say they feel safe at school. Staff are skilled at ensuring that real-life incidents are well managed and use these to develop students' skills to deal with challenges.
- Strong relationships in the school successfully form the basis for behaviour management. Consequently, the use of sanctions and physical intervention is rare, as are instances of bullying. There have been no instances of anyone going missing. There are strong systems in place to respond to any child protection concerns.
- Staff recruitment is well managed, and students are involved in the process. Their views are taken into account and they get prompt feedback on the outcome of their input.
- Since the last inspection, formal and informal supervision of staff has improved and now exceeds national minimum requirements. Training programmes for staff are thorough, with strong support for induction and professional development.
- The management team lead staff in regular assessments of the quality of boarding and make any necessary changes.
- The whole ethos of the residential provision centres on the creative planning and delivery of care to meet individual need. Staff ensure that equality of opportunity is well afforded for all within a robust risk assessment framework.
- All areas for improvement identified at the last inspection have been fully addressed.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

Boarding/Residential provision		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	A school which provides an exceptional quality of care and significantly exceeds minimum requirements.
Grade 2	Good	A school which provides a high quality of care that exceeds minimum requirements.
Grade 3	Adequate	A school which meets minimum requirements but needs to improve the quality of care it provides.
Grade 4	Inadequate	A school where minimum requirements are not met and the quality of care has serious weaknesses.

School details

Unique reference number	118226
Social care unique reference number	SC012597
Local authority	Isle of Wight
Inspection number	426393

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection of residential provision was carried out under the Children Act 1989, as amended by the Care Standards Act 2000, having regard to the national minimum standards for residential special schools.

Type of school	Special
School category	Non-maintained special
Age range of pupils	11–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	48
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	33
Number of boarders on roll	39
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Dr Paddie Collyer
Headteacher	Dr Brendan Carleton
Date of previous school inspection	12–13 October 2010
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